

Washington Update

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1. Federal Leadership Announce Presidential Directive to Strengthen Biodefenses

President Bush has made strengthening the nation's defenses against biological weapons a critical national priority. Federal departments and agencies have reviewed their efforts to find new and better ways to secure America from bioattacks. The results of the review is "Biodefense for the 21st Century," a Presidential directive released on April 28, 2004. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security, has created a fact sheet on biodefense preparedness that pulls highlights from the Presidential directive. Read the HHS Fact Sheet at <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040428.html> <<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040428.html>> . The Presidential Directive is available at <http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/HSPD10Biodefensefor21stCentury042804.pdf>.

2. NASEMSD EMS Rural Needs Survey Results Available

The State EMS Rural Needs Survey was conducted as part of the development of the national “Rural/Frontier EMS Agenda for the Future.” It replicates part of “Challenges of Rural Emergency Medical Services – An Opinion Survey of State EMS Directors,” a report published in 2000. The portions replicated include the identification of needs and issues important to the provision of rural EMS, and the perceived need for capital budget items for the provision of rural EMS. Personnel “recruitment/retention” remains the single most significant issue or need in the provision of rural EMS according to both the 2000 and 2004 surveys. “Financing” remained a prominently identified need through both surveys, while “24/7 coverage,” “communications,” and “response time” emerged as far greater concerns in the 2004 survey than in 2000. “Communications equipment” was the most often cited capital equipment/facility need in both surveys by slight margins. “Training equipment,” “medical equipment” and “ambulances” also finished strong in the 2004 survey. For more information on the survey, contact NASEMSD’s Kevin McGinnis at mcginnis@nasemsd.org.

3. Articles in Press about Rural EMS Agenda

NASEMSD is participating in the “Rural/Frontier EMS Agenda for the Future” project. NASEMSD representatives on the steering committee for this project include Jim Derrick (NM), Dean Cole (NE), Fergus Laughridge (NV), David Lake (KS), and Greg Mears (NC). Two recent articles about the Rural Agenda project have appeared in the press. To read the article in Rural Roads, visit <http://www.nrharural.org/rurroads/current/contents.html>. To read the article in Merginet.com, visit <http://www.merginet.com/index.cfm?pg=volunteers&fn=RuralAgendaFuture>.

4. NEMSIS Task Force, State Data Manager, and EMS Software Developers Meeting Scheduled for June

On June 8-10, 2004, in Washington, D.C., there will be a group of meetings for the NEMSIS Task Force, state data managers, and EMS software developers. The meeting will provide an update on NEMSIS, the NHTSA version 2 Dataset and its implementation. Participants will discuss the status of the Memorandum of Agreement that has been endorsed by 44 states and territories. The meeting will provide a draft proposal and definition of what “compliance” means with respect to the NHTSA dataset and XML standard and discuss how compliance with the NHTSA dataset and XML standard may determine which software may or may not be used by local EMS systems in states endorsing the Memorandum of Agreement. Finally, the meeting will promote dialogue on how to improve and promote the NEMSIS initiative to make sure it stays in touch and in line with the EMS industry. NASEMSD can support \$500 in travel expenses for State EMS data managers (one per state) to attend the meeting. For more information, contact Greg Mears at gdm@med.unc.edu.

5. NASEMSD EMSC Partnership Provides Benefits

In a letter to David Heppel, MD, director of the Division of Child, Adolescent and Family Health at the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCH) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), NASEMSD Executive Director Elizabeth Armstrong expressed great satisfaction with the organization's collaborations with the EMSC program. "NASEMSD has greatly enjoyed and strongly valued its working partnership with the EMSC Program and considers the support of this program to be at the core of the organization's success in supporting health and well-being of people of all ages," stated the letter. The support of the EMSC Program has been critical to a great number of NASEMSD's achievements. For more information, contact Elizabeth Armstrong at Armstrong@nasemsd.org.

6. NASEMSD Member Satisfaction Survey Underway

The National Association of State EMS Directors (NASEMSD) has retained an independent firm, Research USA, to conduct a member satisfaction survey of NASEMSD. Members are being contacted by telephone to provide their opinions, so that NASEMSD staff and officers can better meet needs. At press time, 30 interviews have been completed. Others are being called. Please invest the time to help make this organization more useful to you. Should you have any questions, please contact: NASEMSD Treasurer Jay Bradshaw, (207) 287-3953, or Executive Director Beth Armstrong, (703) 538-1799 x5.

7. FICEMS Bill Introduced

Advocates for EMS is encouraging interested parties to contact their Senators and ask them to cosponsor S. 2351, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Support Act of 2004, which would establish a Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Medical Services (FICEMS). This committee would coordinate various Federal agencies that are involved in EMS, including Health and Human Services; Homeland Security Department; and National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. Senator Collins (ME) and Senator Feingold (WI) introduced S. 2351 on April 27, 2004. Senators should be contacted by May 7, 2004, if possible. For more information and for sample letters, contact Advocates for EMS' Dana Stewart at dstewart@cgagroup.com.

8. House Passes Continuity of Government Bill

On April 22, 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Continuity in Representation Act of 2004 (H.R. 2844). This bill amends Federal law concerning the election of Senators and Representatives to require States to hold special elections to fill vacancies in the House of Representatives within 45 days after a vacancy is announced in the extraordinary circumstance that vacancies in representation from the States exceed 100. The Senate is considering the bill.

9. DHS First to Define Interoperability Requirements for First Responder Community

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS') Science and Technology Directorate on April 26, 2004, announced the release of the first comprehensive Statement of Requirements (SoR) document outlining future technology requirements for public safety wireless communications and interoperability. The SoR, developed under the SAFECOM Program, marks the first time the 50,000 public safety agencies have a document that defines future requirements for communicating and sharing information – as authorized, when and where needed, and in a manner that allows for the most effective use of that information. The SoR is available at www.safecomprogram.gov <<http://www.safecomprogram.gov>> .

10. CMS Issues Educational Article of Interest to Ambulance Providers

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a new Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) educational article of interest to ambulance services that use third-party billing companies. The article, "Medicare Providers: Their Vendors, Clearinghouses, or Other Third Party Billers, and the HIPAA/Medicare Contingency Plan," is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0414.pdf>.

11. HRSA Requests Information from States

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is interested in learning what criteria, if any, each state uses to assess the financial health of the trauma system components. In addition, HRSA is interested in knowing if you have established at the state level trauma system data elements to evaluate the effectiveness of the state system (i.e. what are you monitoring?). Please help with these requests by sending your responses to librarian@trauma-ems.org.

12. CDC Futures Initiative Updates Provided

In the last two months, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has considered several organizational prototypes, representing varying degrees of change for the organization. These prototypes were shared with partners by mail and at a broadcast on April 12. Based on input from within the CDC and from outside partners, CDC has determined that it can achieve many of its priorities by retaining the best elements of the current structure, while enhancing its ability to address strategic imperatives. The prototypes explored, decisions to date and satellite broadcast are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/futures/update.htm>. The CDC welcomes input from partners during this process. Comments should be sent to futuresgroup@cdc.gov.

13. NHTSA Requests Reports on All Unintentional Deployments of Automotive Safety Equipment

Recently, there has been increased media attention about the potential dangers of extrication-related deployments of automotive safety equipment (i.e. airbags, seat belt pretensioners, etc.) to emergency personnel during rescue and EMS operations. While there have been reports of injuries to rescuers, the prevalence of these types of incidents is not known. NHTSA's Crash Investigation Program and Emergency Medical Services Division will continue to monitor and analyze the problem. In order to determine the extent and nature of any hazard, and design appropriate countermeasures, it is crucial that NHTSA receive information on as many of these incidents as possible. Emergency service providers are reminded to report all unintentional deployments of automotive safety equipment, whether or not the rescuer is injured, by one of the following methods: 1) Phone (202) 366-2425 or (877) 201-3172; 2) Email SCI@nhtsa.dot.gov; 3) Send a fax to the attention of SCI Program to (202) 366-5374; or 4) Mail U.S. DOT-NHTSA, Special Crash Investigation Program (NPO-122), Attn: Thomas Roston, 400 Seventh St., SW, Room 6213, Washington, DC 20590.

14. ANSI HSSP Biometric Report Released

Biometric technologies are becoming the foundation of an array of highly secure identification and verification solutions. They consist of automated methods of identifying a person or verifying the identity of a person based upon recognition of a physiological or behavioral characteristic. Physiological characteristics include hand, finger, facial, iris and speech. Behavioral characteristics are traits that are learned or acquired, such as dynamic signature verification and keystroke dynamics. ANSI has a Homeland Security Standards Panel that is working on this issue. A recent workshop identified five issues that need to be explored. First, there is a need for a single certification body for biometrics products that are expected to be utilized by the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration. Second, there is a need for speaker recognition interoperability standards. Third, there needs to be a performance-testing program for biometric standards. Fourth, conformance-testing methodologies should be developed for the biometric interoperability standards under development. Finally, the users need, in the shortest timeframe possible, the performance evaluation standards that are being developed under INCITS/M1 and JTC 1/SC 37. For more information, contact Matthew Deane at mdeane@ansi.org.

15. SARS Information Updated on CDC Web Site

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have updated several online documents regarding Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/situation.htm> for the latest information on the SARS situation, including links to CDC's Health Advisories reflecting details about suspected and confirmed SARS cases. In addition, "Interim Guidance: Air Medical Transport for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Patients" has been updated. This guidance is

intended to assist air medical transport (AMT) service providers in using specialized and/or specially equipped aircraft to transport SARS patients while ensuring the safety of patients and transport personnel. This guidance should not be generalized to commercial passenger aircraft. To view this updated document, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/airtransport-sarspatients.htm>.

16. Upcoming Events (denotes event is newly added)**

Navigator 2004 Emergency Dispatch Conference & Expo, May 2-7, 2004, Las Vegas, Nev. Information is available at <http://www.emergencydispatch.org/NAVIGATOR/index.html>.

National EMS Week, May 16-22, 2004, Information is available at <http://www.acep.org>.

Optimizing Emergency Department Management, May 24-25, 2004, The Wyndham Tremont, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

Rural-Frontier EMS Summit, May 26, 2004, San Diego, Calif. Held in conjunction with the NRHA Convention. Information is available at <http://www.nrharural.org/EMSagenda/> or contact EliBriggs@NRHArural.org.

Hospital Emergency Management Strategies, May 26-27, 2004, Tremont Hotel, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

2004 Defense Medical R & D and Procurement Conference, June 21-23, 2004, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, Md. Information is available at <http://www.marketaccess.org/MEDCONF.asp>.

NASEMSD Mid-Year Meeting, June 26-27, 2004, Washington, DC. Program and registration details are available at <http://www.nasemsd.org/> <<http://www.nasemsd.org/>> .

**Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services Summer 2004 Accreditation Seminar, July 24, 2004, Marriott Boston Copley Place Hotel, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.caas.org/>.

The 2004 Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Meeting: "Highway Safety – Priority 1.0", Sept. 25-29, 2004, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii. Information is available at <http://www.ghsa.org>.

ASTHO 2004 Annual Meeting: "Communication, Cooperation, Coordination – Building Bridges in Public Health", Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2004, St. Paul, Minn. Information is available at <http://www.astho.org/>.

Drive for Life, 2004 MADD National Conference, Sept. 29-Oct. 3, 2004, Gaylord Texan

Resort and Convention Center, Grapevine, Texas. Information is available at <http://www.madd.org/>.